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THE TOUCHSTONE HOUSE

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NEW YORK CITY

AS LINCOLN'S FRIENDS SAW HIM

LINCOLN AS HIS FRIENDS AND ADMIRERS KNEW HIM DURING HIS LIFETIME

“**F**ICTION can furnish no match for the romance of Lincoln's life, and biography will be searched in vain for startling vicissitudes of fortune, so great power and glory won from such humble beginnings and such adverse circumstances It is now forty years since I first saw and heard Abraham Lincoln, but the impression he left on my mind is ineffaceable. After his great success in the West he came to New York to make a political address. He appeared in every sense of the word like one of the plain people among whom he loved to be counted. At first sight there was nothing imposing, nor impressive about him except that his stature singled him out in a crowd. His *clothes hung awkwardly on his great frame*; his face was of dark pallor without the slightest tinge of color; its seamed and rugged features bore the furrows of hardship and struggle; his deep-set eyes looked sad and anxious; his countenance in repose gave very little evidence of the great brain that had raised him from the lowest to the highest station among the people.”

From Joseph Choate's Address before the Edinburgh Philosophical Institute, November 13, 1900.

We feel that this description which Mr. Choate gave to Edinburgh of Abraham Lincoln, answers his letter published in *The Art World* condemning George Gray Barnard's statue of Lincoln—as a matter of fact Mr. Choate's description here even reads like a description of Mr. Barnard's statue.

Of Abraham Lincoln's personal appearance we submit a quotation from A. K. McClure's "Lincoln and Men of Wartime" (Page 41). Col. McClure knew Lincoln and loved him and he writes as a friend.

"I hastened to Springfield and reached there at seven in the evening. I had telegraphed Lincoln the hour I would arrive and that I must return at eleven that night. I went directly from the depot to Lincoln's house and rang the bell which was answered by Lincoln himself opening the door. I doubt whether I wholly concealed my disappointment at meeting him. Tall, gaunt, ungainly, ill clad, with a homeliness of manner that was unique in itself. I confess that my heart sank within me as I re-

membered that this was the man chosen by a great nation to become its ruler in the gravest period of its history. I remember his dress as if it were yesterday—snuff colored and slouchy pantaloons; open black vest, held by a few brass buttons, straight or evening dress coat, with tightly fitting sleeves to exaggerate his long, bony arms, and all supplemented by an awkwardness that was uncommon among men of intelligence."

It seems perhaps only fair to state here that most of the people who are so bitterly criticising Barnard's Lincoln *have not seen the statue*. They are judging entirely from photographs published in various papers which Mr. Barnard had condemned as not good. Mr. Choate had never seen the statue when he wrote his letter criticising it. Mr. Robert Lincoln frankly says that he has not seen the statue, and when he also says that he is contented to have seen the photographs of "the beastly thing" we wonder if he would be equally contented to have his father judged by the incredible photographs that were taken of him during his lifetime and which Mr. Robert Lincoln is so eager to have destroyed. Fancy conducting a campaign about any work of art entirely with inadequate photographs! It seems hardly believable, but that is what is being done in relation to George Gray Barnard's statue, and this in the face of the fact that excellent photographs have been taken and are at the disposal of any magazine. The photographs published in *The October TOUCHSTONE* were from the original model of the head of the statue to be sent to England. It has been said that these were taken from a different model, but this is not true, and the people who have so thought have never seen either the model or the statue. The writer of this article has seen all the statues and the models in the studio and is adequately prepared to make definite statements on the subject.

It has been suggested that if a few artists had been invited by Mr. Barnard to see his Lincoln in the progress of development he would have made a different statue, one more formal, more stylish, more after the art standards of his busy critics. I am advised by Mr. Barnard that at least one hundred artists visited his studio during the two years that he has been working on the Lincoln memorials. Among these were some of the greatest sculptors and painters of America, England and France.

Although disliking very much to enter

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into any controversy over a work of art, I have persuaded Mr. Barnard and his committee to let me continue my expression of interest in the Barnard Lincoln, and to quote a series of close-up impressions of Lincoln from men who knew him and loved him during his lifetime. They one and all, as I have said of Mr. Choate's statements, read like a description of Mr. Barnard's statue.

And so although Mr. Barnard may not have pleased Mr. Robert Lincoln, who evidently desires to transform his father into a mould of fashion, and a few other people who care more for style than truth, we feel that the sincere people of this country, the democrats, the modern people who are not ashamed of the origin of our Democracy or of our Great Democrat, will be interested in the opinions of Mr. Lincoln's most intimate friends and admirers.

FIRST of all in the category of the people who knew Lincoln there was his old law partner, William H. Herndon, for sixteen years his close friend and biographer. Although Mr. Robert Lincoln has sought to have the plates of the Herndon "Biography" destroyed, a few of these are still in existence fortunately for the lovers of Lincoln. According to Mr. Herndon, Abraham Lincoln was:

"Six feet four inches high, and when he left the city of his home for Washington was fifty-one years old, having good health and no gray hairs, or but a few, on his head. He was thin, wiry, sinewy, raw-boned: thin through the breast to the back, and narrow across the shoulders; standing he leaned forward—was what may be called stoop-shouldered, inclining to the consumptive by build. His usual weight was one hundred and eighty pounds. His organization—rather his structure and functions—worked slowly. His blood had to run a long distance from his heart to the extremities of his frame, and his nerve force had to travel through dry ground a long distance before his muscles were obedient to his will. His structure was loose and leathery; his body was shrunk and shrivelled; he had dark skin, dark hair and looked woe-struck. The whole man, body and mind, worked slowly as if it needed oiling. Physically he was a very powerful man, lifting with ease four hundred pounds, and in one case six hundred pounds. His mind was like his body and worked slowly but strongly. Hence there was very little bodily or mental wear

and tear in him. When he walked he moved cautiously but firmly, his long arms and giant hands swung down by his side. He walked with even tread, the inner sides of his feet being parallel. He put the whole foot flat down on the ground at once, not landing on the heel; he likewise lifted his foot all at once, not rising from the toe, and hence he had no spring to his walk. His walk was undulatory—catching and pocketing tire, weariness and pain, all up and down his person, and thus preventing them from locating. The first impression of a stranger, or a man who did not observe closely, was that his walk implied shrewdness and cunning—that he was a tricky man; but in reality, it was the walk of caution and firmness. In sitting down on a common chair he was no taller than ordinary men. His legs and arms were abnormally, unnaturally long, and in undue proportion to the remainder of his body. It was only when he stood up that he loomed above other men.

"Mr. Lincoln's head was long, and tall from the base of the brain and from the eyebrows. His head ran backwards, his forehead rising as it ran back at a low angle, like Clay's, and unlike Webster's, which was almost perpendicular. The size of his hat measured at the hatter's block was seven and one-eighth, his head being, from ear to ear, six and one-half inches, and from the front to the back of the brain eight inches. Thus measured it was not below the medium size. His forehead was narrow but high; his hair was dark, almost black, and lay floating where his fingers or the winds left it, piled up at random. His cheek-bones were high, sharp and prominent; his jaws were long and upcurved; his nose was large, long, blunt, and a little awry towards the right eye; his chin was sharp and upcurved; his eyebrows cropped out like a huge rock on the brow of a hill; his long sallow face was wrinkled and dry, with a hair here and there on the surface; his cheeks were leathery; his ears were large, and ran out almost at right angles from his head, caused partly by heavy hats and partly by nature; his lower lip was thick, hanging, and undercurved, while his chin reached for the lip upcurved; his neck was neat and trim, his head being well balanced on it; there was the lone mole on the right cheek, and Adam's apple on his throat. Thus stood, walked, acted, and looked Abraham Lincoln.

"He was not a pretty man by any means, nor was he an ugly one; he was a homely

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man, careless of his looks, plain-looking and plain-acting. He had no pomp, display or dignity so-called. He appeared simple in his carriage and bearing. He was a sad-looking man; his melancholy dripped from him as he walked. His apparent gloom impressed his friends, and created sympathy for him—one means of his great success. He was gloomy, abstracted, and joyous—rather humorous—by turn, but I do not think he knew what real joy was for many years!”

OF equal value is the record of Lincoln's secretary, John G. Nicolay, written in nineteen hundred and one, evidently to remove what he calls “misrepresentation” of his chief; due, so he asserts, to “blind inference from his humble origin, and jest and malice during political campaigns.” Without specifying the precise character of these alleged “misrepresentations” he thus disposes of the matter of looks: “Large head with high crown of skull, thick, bushy hair; large and deep eye caverns, heavy eyebrows, large nose, large ears, large mouth, thin upper and somewhat thick under lip; very high and prominent cheek bones thin and sunken, strongly developed jaw bones; chin slightly upturned—a thin but sinewy neck, rather long; long arms, large hands, chest thin and narrow as compared with his great height, legs of more than proportionate length, and large feet. The first impression will naturally be that a man with such long limbs and large and prominent features could not possibly be handsome, and this would be true of all men of ordinary height, but it must be borne in mind that Lincoln's height was extraordinary.”

Nicolay then quotes Thomas D. Jones, a sculptor, who went to Springfield to make a bust of Lincoln, in December, eighteen hundred and sixty, of which he wrote in a Cincinnati paper: “He was a spare, bony, lean, and muscular man; his arms were very long and powerful. His head was neither Greek, nor Roman, nor Celt, for his upper lip was too short for that, or a Low German. *There are few such men in the world;* where they come from originally is not positively known. The profile lines of the forehead and nose resemble each other. The line of the forehead from the root of the nose to the hair above comparison is slightly convex. The eyes are not large. His habit of thought and very delicate digestion gave him a lean face and a spare figure. He had

a fine suit of hair until the barbers at Washington attended to his toilet.”

According to Isaac N. Arnold, Member of Congress from Illinois, biographer and intimate friend of Lincoln: “He stooped, leaning forward as he walked. He was very athletic, with long swinging arms, large bony hands and of great physique. His legs and arms were disproportionately long. His forehead was high, his hair very dark, nearly black and rather stiff and coarse. His eyebrows were heavy, his eyes dark grey, very expressive and varied. His nose was large, clearly defined and well shaped, cheek bones high and projecting. His mouth firm. The best bust of him is that of Volk modelled in eighteen hundred and sixty from life.

AMONG Lincoln's intimate friends, companions and correspondents none stood higher than Henry C. Whitney, whose voluminous work, “Life on the Circuit with Lincoln,” discloses an immense fund of knowledge relating to the middle period of Lincoln's activity. Of the physical Lincoln at that time says Whitney, “his legs and arms were disproportionally long, his feet and hands were abnormally large, he was awkward in his gait and actions. His skin was dark, sallow, his features were coarse, his expression kind and amiable; his eyes were indicative of deep reflection, and, in times of repose of deep sorrow as well. His head was high, but not large, his forehead was broad at the base, but retreated, indicating marked perceptive qualities, but not great reflective ones—and in this phrenology is sadly at fault. He wore a hat measuring seven and one-eighth. His ears were large; his hair, coarse, black and bushy, which stood out all over his head, with no appearance of ever having been combed. His mobile face was ranged in modes of expression, through a long gamut; it was rare that an artist could catch the expression, *and Lincoln's face was of that kind that the expression was of greater consequence than the contour of the features.*” When he first knew him his attire and physical habits were on a plane with those of an ordinary farmer—his hat was innocent of a nap; his boots had no acquaintance with blacking; his clothes had not been introduced to the whiskbroom.

The following striking glimpse of Lincoln was recorded by Carl Schurz, who first saw him at the debate with Douglas in Quincy in eighteen fifty-eight: “I must

confess I was somewhat shocked by Lincoln's swarthy face with strong features, its deep furrows, and its benignant, melancholy eyes. His neck emerged, long and sinewy, from a white collar turned down over a thin black necktie. His lank, ungainly body was clad in a rusty overcoat with sleeves that should have been larger; but his arms appeared so long that the sleeves of a "store coat" could hardly be expected to cover them all the way down the wrist. His black trousers, too, permitted a very full view of his very large feet. I had seen in Washington and in the West several public men of rough appearance; but none whose looks seemed quite uncouth, not to say grotesque, as Lincoln."

How Lincoln was perfectly understood by such men as Henry B. Rankin, a Springfield neighbor and friend, is shown in this interpretation which appears in his "Personal Reminiscences of Lincoln." "There is in the deepened furrows and increasing seriousness of his sad face, to be read the record of his mental struggle, the strain of his emotion and the draft upon his vital sympathies. His was a face marred by toils and anguish, such as seldom come to the sons of men for the face to bear a record of. This is the face and this is the body, bearing in form and features, such records of experience as may yet find worthy expression in statue or portrait by the skill of some master artist, whose genius and technique may yet bring before us again the personality and power we once beheld."

ONE of the few surviving auditors of the Cooper Institute address, George Haven Putnam, wrote in his "Memoirs": "The first impression of the man from the West did nothing to contradict the expectation of something weird, rough and uncultured; the long ungainly figure upon which hung clothes that while newly made for this trip were undoubtedly the work of an unskillful tailor; the large feet and clumsy hands, of which the speaker seems to be unduly conscious, at the outset at least; the long gaunt head capped with a shock of hair that seemed not often thoroughly brushed, made a picture which did not fit in with New York's conception of a finished statesman."

Of Lincoln whom he heard speak in Cincinnati, in eighteen fifty-nine, Moncure D. Conway, left this record: "Browning's

description of the German professor, 'three parts sublime to one grotesque,' was applicable to this man. The face had a battered and bronzed look without being hard. His nose was prominent and buttressed a strong and high forehead. His eyes were high vaulted, and had an expression of sadness. His mouth and chin were close together."

On Independence Day, eighteen fifty-six, Seymour D. Thompson saw and heard Lincoln speak at Oregon, of which he wrote a few years ago: "He was tall and did not stand erect. His face was not strong. It was not square; its jaws were not well set, its mouth was weak, his eyes were destitute of animation except when aroused, and then they were full of fire. But in repose they seemed wholly dead, snake-like. I had never seen eyes that impressed me so unfavorably."

Robert Dale Owen expressed his love for Lincoln as he was, with his rugged features, his coarse and rebellious hair and his sad dreamy eyes.

No more reliable authority on the early Lincoln can be found than John N. Scripps, his first serious biographer, who consulted Lincoln freely before publishing his work, in 1860. Therein is incorporated this description of the then Presidential candidate, "His frame is muscular, but gaunt and wiry. His hair is black, he steps with his head inclined forward. His head sits well on his shoulders."

One of the committee to receive Lincoln when he spoke at Cooper Institute in 1860, Charles B. Nott, described him as a plain man, an ungainly man, unadorned, apparently uncultivated, showing the awkwardness of self-conscious rusticity. His dress that night before a New York audience was a black frock coat, "ill setting and too short for him in the body, skirt and arms—a rolling collar low down, disclosing his long, thin, shrivelled throat, uncovered and exposed."

We wish to say to our readers that the complete source of every quotation made in this article may be had in detail by writing to the editor of this magazine. We have not printed this information because it would so materially lengthen the article. Just as we are going to press we read with the greatest interest a cable to the *New York Times* from London saying that it has been announced in the House of Commons that the English Government has accepted the Barnard statue.

